

The 2024 Hilltop Church

Johann Sebastian Bach Festival



Glossary of Terms

- ◆ **Prelude and Fugue:** A two-part composition for keyboard, featuring a free-form opening piece and a complementary piece of advanced polyphonic writing, based on a one phrase subject—the fugue.
- ◆ **Chorale Prelude:** A musical prelude to a German Lutheran Chorale, or hymn.
- ◆ **Tocatta:** From the Latin—to touch. A work that demonstrates the virtuosity of the player.
- ◆ **Stop:** Notice the picture above. The ‘stops’ can be seen just above Bach’s right hand. Pushing these in cause the bar to block the airflow to the pipes, thus ‘stopping’ the sound. Pulling them out aligned holes that allowed the pipes to speak. Thus the term, ‘pulling out all the stops’ has come to mean a big sound - or something that is ‘all in.’
- ◆ **Rank:** Pipe are arranged in order, according to their weight so to balance the chest upon which they stand. Look at the Hilltop organ façade in the chancel, or turn around and look at the pipes in the gallery.
- ◆ **The Great:** This refers to the middle keyboard, which also contains the loudest and broadest sounding sets of pipes.
- ◆ **The Positiv:** The refers to the lowest of three keyboards. In the picture, Bach’s instrument has a ‘Rückpositiv’ or a division of pipes that was placed over the gallery rail. If you were looking up from the floor below, he would not be visible as he is sitting between the positive and the rest of the organ. There was no electricity in Bach’s time, so all sound was controlled using long, thin pieces of wood - known as trackers. The trackers to the positive would have run under the pedalboard.
- ◆ **No Electricity?:** Even though it is only Bach in the picture, he could never have been alone. The organ required pumping - probably by choir boys or by one of his many sons. There was usually a gauge so he could see when the air pressure was going down.
- ◆ **Brustwerk:** This refers to the pipes that belonged to the upper keyboard - usually the smallest pipes in the organ.
- ◆ **Pedals:** This is the large keyboard which is played with both feet. In Bach’s time, there were about 30 pedals. The standard modern pedalboard contains 32 notes.
- ◆ **Couplers:** The keyboards and their pipes can be joined so that the sound can be enlarged. The keyboard pipes can also be coupled to the pedalboard